

Media Advisory

from the South Carolina Forestry Commission



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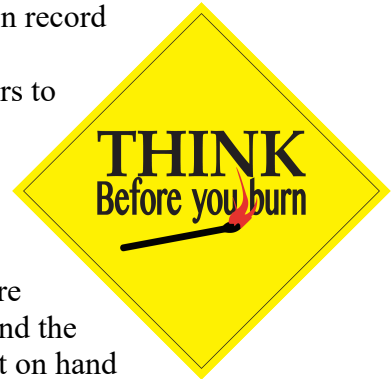
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SC Forestry Commission urging public to be vigilant against wildfire

COLUMBIA, S.C. — Against the backdrop of the 16th-driest April on record and amid an abnormally dry May for nearly half the state, the South Carolina Forestry Commission is encouraging citizens and landowners to exercise caution when burning yard debris and/or conducting prescribed burns.

Officials from the only agency responsible for wildfire suppression in all unincorporated areas of the state are reminding the public that most wildfires are largely preventable when the proper precautions are taken. Those precautions include creating an adequate firebreak around the area to be burned and having enough personnel, water and equipment on hand to keep the fire under control at all times.



“Even though we’re not experiencing extremely low relative humidities or high winds, **the high temperatures and** dry conditions in our state do spark concern over the potential for increased wildfire ignitions,” said Darryl Jones, SCFC Fire Chief. “And with this being a long holiday weekend, with many people off work and doing things outside – including things like cookouts and debris burning – the potential for **some of those fires to escape** is higher than usual at this time.”

An astounding 98 percent of all wildland fires are caused by human activities, and escaped debris burns are responsible for nearly 50 percent of them.

“Just because we’re coming out of what is normally our busiest firefighting season is no reason for people to be any less cautious with fire,” said Jones. “As always, we want people who plan to burn to be prepared, respect the weather and never leave a fire unattended for any reason or for any amount of time.”

State law requires that citizens outside of unincorporated areas notify the Forestry Commission before burning outdoors. The notification is a quick, easy, automated process, and the toll-free numbers for each county are provided at the link below:

<http://www.state.sc.us/forest/fyard.htm>.

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As the only state agency responsible for wildfire suppression in all unincorporated areas of the state, the South Carolina Forestry Commission protects nearly 13 million acres from wildland fire. More than 500 county, municipal and volunteer fire departments operate more than 1,100 fire stations in South Carolina. The Forestry Commission cooperates with these departments to prevent and control structural and wildland fires, employing highly trained firefighters and specialized equipment when fires burn into forested areas that are difficult to reach.